

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 17 - 19 have been added. Claims 4 and 5 have been cancelled. Claims 1, 6, and 13 have been amended, as follows:

1. (currently amended) A sound processing method comprising the steps of:
separating an input audio signal of at least one system into a plurality of separated signal components corresponding respectively to a plurality of different types of sound sources, the input audio signal containing an ambient sound component and an on-the-spot speech sound component, and at least part of the plurality of the separated signal components including the ambient sound component and the on-the-spot speech component;

subjecting each ~~signal~~ of the ambient sound component and the on-the-spot speech component of at the least part of the plurality of separated signal components to individual sound processing suitable for the signal component, the sound processing of the ambient sound component including sound field control processing for creating a spatial impression of sound with a presence; and

outputting the plurality of separated signal components as at least one audio signal after each signal component of the at least part thereof is subjected to the individual sound processing.

2. (original) A sound processing method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said outputting step comprises synthesizing the plurality of separated signal components with the at least part thereof subjected to the individual sound processing into a synthesized audio signal, and outputting the synthesized audio signal.

3. (original) A sound processing method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said

outputting step comprises outputting the plurality of separated signal components with the at least part thereof subjected to the individual sound processing, separately as audio signals.

Claims 4 - 5 (cancelled).

6. (currently amended) A sound processing apparatus comprising:

a signal separator that separates an input audio signal of at least one system into a plurality of separated signal components corresponding respectively to a plurality of different types of sound sources, the input audio signal containing an ambient sound component and an on-the-spot speech sound component, and at least part of the plurality of separated signal components including the ambient sound component and the on-the-speech sound component;

a sound processor that subjects each [[signal]] of the ambient sound component and the on-the-spot speech component of the at least part of the plurality of separated signal components to individual sound processing suitable for the signal component, the sound processing on the ambient sound component including sound field control processing for creating a spatial impression of a sound with a presence; and

an output controller that outputs the plurality of separated signal components as at least one audio signal after each signal component of the at least part thereof is subjected to the individual sound processing.

7. (original) A sound processing apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said output controller synthesizes the plurality of separated signal components with the at least part thereof subjected to the individual sound processing into a synthesized audio signal, and outputs the synthesized audio signal.

8. (original) A sound processing apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said output controller outputs the plurality of separated signal components with the at least part thereof subjected to the individual sound processing, separately as audio signals.

9. (original) A sound processing apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said signal separator performs spectrum analysis upon said input audio signal to extract a specific signal component, and subtracts the extracted specific signal component from the input audio signal to obtain a remaining signal component of the input audio signal.

10. (original) A sound processing apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said signal separator comprises a plurality of signal enhancement/suppression devices that enhance part of a plurality of signal components contained in said input audio signal, and suppress remaining signal components.

11. (original) A sound processing apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said input audio signal comprises audio signals of a plurality of channels, and said signal separator comprises a plurality of signal separators corresponding respectively to said plurality of channels, and wherein each of said plurality of signal separators performs predetermined sound processing by supplementarily referring to at least one of the audio signals of at least one other channels than a channel corresponding thereto, thereby improving accuracy of separation of the input audio signal of the corresponding channel into a plurality of separated signal components.

12. (original) A sound processing apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said sound processor comprises a sound field controller that performs sound field control processing upon each signal component of the at least part of the plurality of separated signal components.

13. (currently amended) A sound processing apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said sound processor selectively eliminates at least part of the plurality of separated signal components, and ~~instead~~ in place thereof uses an externally input audio signal.

14. (original) A sound processing apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said sound processor changes sound quality or voice quality of each signal component of at least part of the plurality of separated signal components.

15. (original) A sound processing apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said sound processor changes pitch of each signal component of at least part of the plurality of separated signal components.

16. (previously presented) A sound processing apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said sound processor changes speed relative to a time axis or speech speed of each signal component of at least part of the plurality of separated signal components.

17. (new) A sound processing method comprising the steps of:
separating an input audio signal of at least one system into a plurality of separated signal components corresponding respectively to a plurality of different types of sound sources, the input audio signal containing an ambient sound component and an on-the-spot speech sound component, and at least part of the plurality of the separated signal components including the ambient sound component and the on-the-spot speech component;

subjecting the ambient sound component to individual sound processing suitable for the signal component, the sound processing of the ambient sound component including sound field control processing for creating a spatial impression of sound with a

presence; and

outputting the plurality of separated signal components as at least one audio signal after each signal component of the at least part thereof is subjected to the individual sound processing.

18. (new) A sound processing method as claimed in claim 17, wherein said outputting step includes synthesizing the plurality of separated signal components with the at least part thereof subjected to the individual sound processing into a synthesized audio signal, and outputting the synthesized audio signal.

19. (new) A sound processing method as claimed in claim 17, wherein said outputting step includes outputting the plurality of separated signal components with the ambient sound component being subject to the individual sound processing, separately as audio signals.